

17th Meeting of Black and Azov Seas Working Group (BASWG) Istanbul, Türkiye, 26-27 March

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2024	
Task 3.2.1.6	MBSHC - Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission and BASWG17

The 17th meeting of BASWG was held at the Sheraton Istanbul Levent Hotel – Istanbul, Türkiye on 26-27 March 2024, under the chairmanship of Türkiye. The meeting was attended by 20 representatives from five out of six Countries of the Black and Azov Sea Region (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine). Greece participated as the Chart Region F Coordinator and Spain participated as NAVAREA III coordinator. IHO Director Luigi Sinapi represented the IHO Secretariat.



Participants of 17th Black and Azov Sea Working Group

The agenda of the meeting was mainly focused on national reports from the attending members, IHO Capacity Building activities, INT charts and ENC scheme of the Black and Azov Seas, overlaps and gaps in ENC coverage, and implementation of the S-100 Roadmap. Particular attention was given to the coordination of MSI in the region, due to the current situation of conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

The BASWG Chair introduced the meeting, highlighting the importance of the geographical peculiarity of the Black and Azov Sea Region to bring to the attention to the MBSHC and the imperative necessity to implement the new S-100 standard for the safety of navigation.

The MBSHC Chair sent a presentation highlighting those MBSHC23 Actions affecting the BASWG, with particular attention to *Action MBSHC 23/16 – Region F ICCWG supported by the BASWG to reconsider the INT and ENC charting scheme in the Black and Azov Seas globally when the situation in the region is stabilized*, remarking that the current situation in the region of the Black and Azov Seas is still very complicated and challenging in terms of the possibility to performing ordinary hydrographic activities in some areas of the BASs. However, it is important to note that the maritime safety information (MSI) service is under operation enabling the promulgation of the most urgent safety of navigation related warnings.

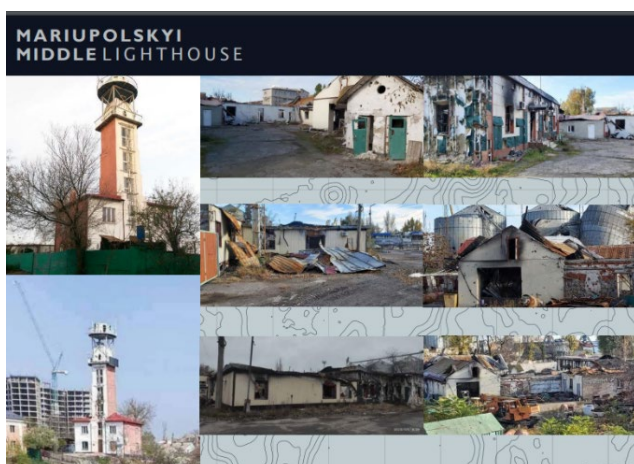
From the national reports provided by the five countries present at the meeting, the following can be seen:

- Bulgaria: lack of personnel to be sent to the IHO-sponsored Cat A and Cat B courses on Hydrography and Nautical Cartography;



New Georgian hydrographic vessel ABKHAZETI, 34m

- Georgia: the Hydrographic Service of Georgia will soon receive a new hydrographic vessel (ABKHAZETI, 34m) for the oceanographic and hydrographic activities and maintenance of floating aids to navigation at sea.
- Romania: the sharing of NAVTEX stations with Bulgaria and the importance of discussing at the next NCSR meeting the upcoming transition from the traditional NAVTEX system to NAVDATA related to the implementation of S-100, as all coastal countries will have to be ready for satellite and internet data transmission and broadcasting.
- Türkiye: the execution of two National S-100 WG meetings, held in November 2023 in the presence of the main national ministries and institutions involved in the implementation of the S-100. This is in line with the IHO Council's recommendation in Action C7/07 (*The Council invited Member States to share their national strategies with regard to the establishment of similar national S-100 committees, as appropriate*). Besides, Türkiye became a member of Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica (HCA) in May 2023.



Mariupol Lighthouse

- Ukraine: hydrographic surveys conducted in 2022-2023 in the Danube and Dnipro rivers, the impossibility to deploy some NAVTEX stations due to the Russian occupation, the destruction of numerous weather stations, Aids to Navigation, light-houses and survey vessels due to the effects of the ongoing war, the reduction of hydro-oceanographic activities in the Black Sea and the Azov Sea due to the implementation of Martial Law in Ukraine, and

then the death of six people working for the Hydrographic Service. It is impossible for Ukraine to fulfil its obligations in accordance with SOLAS regulations, especially in the Northern Western part of the Black Sea.

The IHO Director highlighted that a long time has passed since the last in-person meeting held in Constanta (Romania) in May 2018. From that time, new challenges await the WG, first of all, the implementation of the S-100 standard, which is now a reality that will become effective from 1st January 2026. By that date, the entire community of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Region will have to be ready in line with the S-100 implementation roadmap prepared by the IHO and thanks to the support of all the stakeholders working in support of the S-100. The Working Group allows the six Countries to highlight peculiarities and needs of a specific Region, the Black and Azov Sea, of high interest not only for the IHO, but also for other international organizations working on the sea and for the sea, in such difficult time which the Black and Azov Sea Region and especially the State of Ukraine are living. Furthermore, he highlighted the main cooperation activities undertaken by the IHO internationally and with IHO Member States, the most important outcomes of C-7, with particular focus on the implementation of S-100 Roadmap, Capacity Building and the revision of the IHO Strategic Plan.



Discussions at the 17th Black and Azov Sea Working Group

The consolidated 2024 Capacity Building Work Programme was presented by the IHO Director, with particular highlights on Capacity Building 2024 budget, the Hydrography and Nautical Cartography Cat A and Cat B courses sponsored by the Republic of Korea and Nippon Foundation (Japan), the establishment of the *Project Team on Fund Generation of IHO' Project Initiatives* under the IRCC (iaw C7/22 action), the Empowering Women in Hydrography (EWH) initiatives and the IHO e-Learning center. Then, the MBSHC Capacity Building coordinator highlighted the activities of interest of BASWG, focusing in particular on the "Workshop on MSI Development & Implementation" and the "ENC Quality Assessment Course". The aim and objective of this latter course will be very similar to the "ENC Quality Assessment Workshop", and the IC-ENC Project Fund will pay for one trainee from each organization to attend the workshop.

The Region F INT Chart Coordinator briefed the Working Group on the status of INT Charts in the Region, acknowledging the increased use of INTToGIS by producers, highlighting that the FICCWG ToRs are under revision but not yet at the final stage. He also reminded the BSWG members of the *Survey on S-101 product readiness* launched with the ICCWG Circular Letter No. 04/2024, in accordance with the MBSHC23 final minutes.

The NAVAREA-III Coordinator provided information regarding the NAVTEX coverage and the operational issues occurring in the region, highlighting that the NAVAREA III navigational warnings are broadcasted on both SafetyCast (Iridium) and Safety NET II (Inmarsat). Notwithstanding six NAVTEX stations are out of work, the Mediterranean and Black Seas region is fully covered by the current working stations.

Finally, Türkiye presented two papers respectively on “*Consideration of the definition of Hydrographic Interests*”, inviting the BASWG to incorporate in its work programme the consideration of the use of the terms hydrographic interests and interest in hydrographic matters in relation to the composition of the Council, and “*Involvement of BASWG Representative in the Composition of the Council*”, inviting the BASWG to incorporate in its work programme the consideration of the involvement of BASWG representative in the composition of the Council. Both documents will be presented at the next MBSHC24 conference, having received consensus from all members present at the BASWG17 meeting.

At the end of the meeting, it was unanimously agreed that Türkiye will continue as BASWG Chair, and that the next BASWG18 meeting will be held in March/April/May 2025 (dates and venue TBD), to alternate with MBSHC meetings in even-numbered years.